

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 12, line 3 with the following paragraph:

A first stiffening element 94 having a first edge 96 and a second edge ~~104~~98 is positioned in the upper rear corner 28 of the inflatable curtain 10. A second stiffening element 100 having a first edge 102 and a second edge 104 is positioned in the upper front corner 26 of the inflatable curtain 10. In Figure 1, the first stiffening element 94 and second stiffening element 100 are plastic stays stitched to the inflatable curtain 10. However, any type of semi-rigid material may be used for the stiffening elements 94 and 100, including elastomers, aluminum, or the like, or combinations thereof. In fact, the first and second stiffening elements 94 and 100 may be formed as integral portions of the inflatable curtain 10. This may be accomplished by forming at least a portion of the upper edge 18 of the inflatable curtain 10 out of a piece of semi-rigid fabric, interconnected fabric strips, or the like.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 16, line 16 with the following paragraph:

Shortly after the inflator 78 discharges, the housing 132 opens and the inflatable curtain 10 inflates away from the stored position in a transverse direction 16 away from the roof 130. The inflatable curtain 10 does not inflate evenly, however. In particular, the lower middle portion 34 of the inflatable curtain 10 reaches the first point 150 and the lower rear corner 32 reaches the ~~second-third~~ point ~~152~~154 while the lower front corner 30 remains substantially within the housing 132. The first and second stiffening elements 94 and 100 provide support to the inflatable curtain 10 and reduce the amount of time it takes for the lower front corner 30 and lower rear corner 32 to reach the second and third points 152 and 154.